

## Testimony in Support of

SB 650, AAC Temporary Restraining Orders  
HB 6848, AA Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence

Judiciary Committee  
March 11, 2015

Good morning Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and members of the committee. My name is Daniela Bellows and I am a family violence victim advocate at the Prudence Crandall Center in New Britain, placed in the New Britain Superior Court. At Prudence Crandall we aid victims of domestic violence in the shelter, counseling and in the courts. We urge your support of Senate Bill 650 and House Bill 6848.

### SB 650

Many restraining order clients come to court the day of their hearing frustrated and defeated before the process even begins. They know their abuser will not be appearing in court. Recently a client came to court, six months pregnant, and afraid. After her ex-parte restraining order was temporarily granted, she was filled with a sense of security, however the day of the hearing arrived but her abuser did not. He had told a mutual friend that he knew if he did not come, the court would eventually drop it. This is not a rare incident in the courts, many respondents know how to work around a system designed to protect victims, and they slip between cracks and loopholes so that they are not held responsible. Many applicants ask the courts for an extension, but are told that without the respondent there, it cannot be done. This bill would grant these victims the security they crave, and the knowledge that their concerns are being heard by allowing the court to extend the ex parte restraining orders when service cannot be successfully effectuated by the two-week hearing.

Victims of domestic violence know the patterns of their abusers better than anyone. Recently while assisting a victim, he explained to me that this was his third time filing, as his abuser was skilled at avoiding the marshal. He guessed correctly that the respondent would simply not open the door for the marshal, guaranteeing a lack of in hand service and lack of notice for the hearing date. The applicant said that the marshal could hear the respondent on the other side of the door, but verbal notice did not mean enough to the courts. He wondered how he would get the day off of work the next week to

try again.

#### HB 6848

Nothing is more dangerous than a person losing control, especially someone who has a dangerous weapon. When a victim is granted an emergency restraining order temporarily, there is often a feeling of relief, as well as visceral anxiety. The most dangerous time for a victim is when they leave their abuser, and now but the victim has made a public step, not only revealing themselves as a victim, but the respondent as an abuser. When this abuser has a firearm, this is literally a life or death situation for many. When firearms are temporarily removed from the situation, respondents will continue to have the opportunity to regain them if the hearing does not determine the need for a continuation of the order, but it also give victims the safety they deserve. The probable cause that grants an ex-parte temporary restraining order means the victim's concerns for safety needs to be met legally. One victim asked for wellness checks until their hearing date as their abuser had two firearms and they knew the violence they had lived with could be the violence they died from.

Both the Senate Bill 650 and House Bill 6848 address crucial needs for victims of domestic violence. The ability for the court to extend a temporary ex- parte restraining order if the applicant is present, as well as broadening methods in which law enforcement may provide notice to respondents will greatly enhance victims' sense of security and respondent accountability. House Bill 6848 will greatly improve upon the physical safety of victims of domestic violence and their families.

Again, we urge your support of these important measures. Thank you for your consideration.

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